

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 12, 2013

Agenda Item: 2013-14 Wolf Season Review and Adjustment (if necessary)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time for this Presentation: 20 minutes

Background

The Commission finalized regulations for the 2013-14 Montana wolf hunting and trapping season in July. The 2013 wolf hunting season opened with the archery season on Sept. 7 and will close on March 15, 2014. The trapping season is scheduled to open Dec. 15 and close on March 15, 2014. The 2013-14 season framework included a number of changes from 2012-13, largely intended to increase wolf harvest and decrease wolf abundance in Montana, including a bag limit of up to five wolves, and no statewide or WMU quotas, except in WMUs adjacent to Yellowstone and Glacier national parks as permitted by law. When the Commission adopted the regulations in July, it also directed FWP to provide a review of the wolf harvest following the close of the general deer and elk season, and reserved the right to take action to modify the season framework at its December meeting.

As of Dec. 2, 23,159 wolf hunting licenses have been purchased—21,026 by residents and 2,133 by nonresidents. A total of 18,889—18,642 resident; 247 nonresident—were sold last year. There is no special license required to trap wolves. Ninety-four wolves have been reported harvested in the 87 days the season has been open. Harvests have taken place throughout the wolf's geographic distribution in Montana. In the WMUs around Yellowstone National Park, two wolves have been harvested in WMU 313 (quota is four), and two have been taken in WMU 316 (quota is three). In WMU 110, adjacent to Glacier National Park, one wolf has been taken (quota is two) and the WMU remains open.

The Commission requested a wolf harvest review to include data on harvest numbers, geographic distribution of harvest, consideration of depredation removals, and overall human-caused wolf mortality relative to wolf population model projections. The analysis reveals no apparent need to consider any season adjustments at this time and FWP does not recommend adjustments at this time. FWP will continue to monitor harvest and will notify the Commission of trends that might suggest the need for adjustments.

Public Involvement Process & Results

During the May-July 2013 season-setting process, the Commission received and considered approximately 25,000 comments on the proposed regulations, plus took extensive public comment at its public meetings. At the July meeting, the Commission notified the public that it would make any adjustments deemed necessary at the December meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

The Commission may opt to make no changes or to make adjustments to the framework adopted in July.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The 2013-14 wolf harvest to date has been steady, measured, and broadly distributed. No unanticipated issues have arisen to warrant any mid-season adjustments. Therefore, FWP recommends no changes to the framework adopted in July.

Proposed Motion

As no changes are recommended, no proposed motion is provided.